

# WHERE THERE'S A WILL

## MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

### AUTHOR OF THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE, THE MAN IN LOWER TEN, WHEN A MAN MARRIES

#### ILLUSTRATED BY EDGAR BERT SMITH



## SYNOPSIS.

Minnie, spring-house girl at Hope sanatorium, tells the story. It opens with the arrival of Miss Patty Jennings, who is reported to be engaged to marry a prince, and the death of the old doctor who owns the sanatorium. The estate is left to a scapegrace grandson, Dick Carter, who must appear on a certain date and run the sanatorium successfully for two months or forfeit the inheritance. A case of mumps delays Dick's arrival. Mr. Thornburn is hovering about in hopes of securing the place for a summer hotel. Pierce, a college man in hard luck, is prevailed upon by Van Alstyne, Dick's brother-in-law, to impersonate the missing heir and take charge of the sanatorium until Carter arrives. Dick, who has eloped with Patty's younger sister, Dorothy, arrives.

## CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

"We were held up by the snow," he explained. "We got a sleigh to come over in, but we walked up the hill and came here. I don't mind saying that my wife's people don't know about this yet, and we're going to lay low until we've cooked up some sort of a scheme to tell them." Then he came over and put his hand on my shoulder.

"Poor old Minnie!" he said; "honest, I'm sorry. I've been a hard child to raise, haven't I? But that's all over, Minnie. I've got an incentive now, and it's steady, old boy, for me. You and I will run the place and run it right."

"I don't want to!" I retorted, holding my bedroom slippers to steam before the fire. "I'm going to buy out Timmon's candy store and live a quiet life, Mr. Dick. This place is making me old."

"Nonsense! We're going to work together, and we'll make this the busiest spot in seven counties. Dorothy and I have got it all planned out and we've got some corking good ideas." He put his hands in his pockets and strutted up and down. "It's the day of advertising, you know, Minnie," he said. "You've got to have the goods, and then you've got to let people know you've got the goods. What would you say to a shooting-gallery in the basement, under the reading-room?"

"I couldn't be light-hearted to save my life."

"Your sister's been wild all day," I told Mrs. Dick. "She got your letter to-day—yesterday—but I don't think she's told your father yet."

"What!" she screamed, and caught at the mantelpiece to hold herself. "Not Pat!" she said, horrified, "and father! Here!"

Well, I listened while they told me. They hadn't had the faintest idea that Mr. Jennings and Miss Patty were there at the sanatorium.

"The idea was this, Minnie," said Mr. Dick. "Old—I mean Mr. Jennings—is not well; he has a chronic indisposition—"

"Disposition, I call it," put in Mr. Jennings' daughter.

"And he's apt to regard my running away with Dorothy when I haven't a penny as more of an embarrassment than an elopement."

"Fiddle!" exclaimed Mrs. Dick. "I asked you to marry me, and now they're here and have to spoil it all."

The thought of her father and his disposition suddenly overpowered her and she put her yellow head on the back of a chair and began to cry.

"I—I can't tell him," she sobbed. "I wrote to Pat—why doesn't Pat tell him? Maybe he will think of some way to break it to him. She can do a lot with father."

"I hope she can think of some way to break another Richard Carter to the people of the house," I said tartly.

"Another Richard Carter!" they said together, and then I told them about how we had waited and got desperate, and how we'd brought in Mr. Pierce at the last minute and that he was asleep now at the house. They roared.

To save my life I couldn't see that it was funny. But when I came to the part about Thornburn being there, and his having had a good look at Mr. Pierce, and that he was waiting around with his jaws open to snap up the place when it fell under the hammer, Mr. Dick stopped laughing and looked serious.

"It's possible we can get by Thornburn," I said. "You can slip in to-night, we can get Mr. Pierce out—Lord knows he'll be glad to go—and Miss Dorothy can go back to school. Then, later, when you've got things running and are making good—"

"I'm not going back to school," she declared, "but I'll go away; I'll not stand in your way, Dicky." She took two steps toward the door and waited for him to stop her.

"Nonsense, Minnie," he exclaimed angrily and put his arm around her. "I won't be separated from my wife. We could go to the old shelter-house on the golf links," looking me square in the eye. (I took the hint, and Mrs. Dicky never knew he had been hidden there before.) "Nobody ever goes near it in winter." So I put on my slippers again and we started through the snow across the golf links, Mr. Dick carrying a bundle of firewood, and I leading the way with my lantern.

We got into the shelter-house by my crawling through the window, and when we had lighted the fire and hung up the lantern, it didn't seem so bad. There were two rooms, and Mr. Dick had always used the back one to hide in. It's a good thing Mrs. Dick was not a suspicious person. Many a woman would have wondered when she saw him lift a board in the floor and take out a rusty tin basin, a cake of soap, a moldy towel, a can of sardines, a tooth-brush and a rubber carriage robe to lay over the rafters under the hole in the roof. But it's been my experience that the first few days of married life women are blind because they want to be and after that because they have to be.

It was about four when I left them, sitting on a soap box in front of the fire, toasting sardines on the end of

Mr. Dick's walking-stick. Mrs. Dick made me put on her seal-skin coat, and I took the lantern, leaving them in the freight.

I took a short cut home, crawling through the barbed-wire fence and going through the deer park. I was too tired and cold to think.

## CHAPTER V.

I lay down across my bed at six o'clock that morning, but I was too tired and worried to sleep, so at seven I got up and dressed. I put on two pairs of stockings and heavy shoes, for I knew I was going to do the Eskimo act again that day and goodness knows how many days more, and then I went down and knocked at the door of Miss Patty's room. She hadn't been sleeping, either. She called to me in an undertone to come in, and she was lying propped up with pillows, with something pink around her shoulders and the night lamp burning beside the bed.

I walked over to the foot of the bed. "They're here," I said.

She sat up, and some letters slid to the floor.

"They're here!" she repeated. "Do you mean Dorothy?"

"She and her husband. They came here last night at five minutes to twelve. Their train was held up by the blizzard and they won't come in until they see you. They're hiding in the shelter-house on the golf links."

I think she thought I was crazy; I looked it. She hopped out of bed and closed the door into her sitting-room—Mrs. Hutchins' (Patty's old nurse) room opened off it—and then she came over and put her hand on my arm.

"Will you sit down and try to tell me just what you mean?" she said.

"How can my sister and her—her wretch of a husband have come last night at midnight when I saw Mr. Carter myself not later than ten o'clock?"

Well, I had to tell her then about who Mr. Pierce was and why I had to get him, and she understood almost at once. She was the most understanding girl I ever met. She saw at once what Mr. Sam wouldn't have known in a thousand years—that I wanted to save the old place—not to keep my position—but because I'd been there so long, and my father before me, and had helped to make it what it was and all that.

"But here I am," I finished, "telling you about my troubles and forgetting what I came for. You'll have to go out to the shelter-house, Miss Patty. And I guess you're expected to fix it up with your father."

She stopped unfasting her long braids of hair.

"Certainly I'll go to the shelter-house," she said, "and I'll shake a little sense into Dorothy Jennings—the abominable little idiot! But they needn't think I'm going to help them with father; I wouldn't if I could, and I can't. He won't speak to me. I'm in disgrace, Minnie." She gave her hair a shake, twisted it into a rope and then a knot, and stuck a pin in it. It was lovely; I wish Miss Cobb could have seen her. "You've known father for years, Minnie; have you ever known him to be so—so—"

"Devilish," was the word she meant, but I finished for her.

"Unreasonable!" I said. "Well, once before when you were a little girl, he put his cane through a window in the spring-house, because he thought it needed air. The spring-house, of course, not the cane."

"Exactly," she said, looking around the room, "and now he's putting a cane through every plan I have made."

Well, I left her to get dressed and went to the kitchen. Tillie was there

getting the beef tea ready for the day, but none of the rest was around. "Tillie," I said, "can you trust me?"

She looked up from her beef.

"Whether I can or not, I always have," she answered.

"Well, can I trust you? That's more to the point."

She put down her knife and came over to me, with her hands on her hips.

"Tillie, I don't want you to ask me any questions, but I want four raw eggs in a basket, a pot of coffee and cream, some fruit if you can get it when the chef unlocks the refrigerator room, and bread and butter. They can make their own toast."

"They?" she said, with her mouth open.

But I didn't explain any more. I scribbled a note to Mr. Van Alstyne, telling what had happened, and put it under his door, and then I met Miss Patty in the hall by the billiard room and I gave her some coffee from the basket, in the sun parlor. It was all

dark, although it was nearly eight o'clock, and nobody saw us go out together. It was still snowing, but not so much, and the tracks we had made early in the morning were still there, mine off to one side alone, and the others close together and side by side. Miss Patty did not say much. She was holding her chin high and looking rather angry and determined.

They were both asleep in the shelter-house. He was propped up against the wall on a box, with the rubber carriage robe around him, and she was lying by the fire, with Mrs. Moody's shawl over her and her muff under her head. Miss Patty stood in the doorway for an instant. Then she walked over and, leaning down, shook her sister by the arm.

"Dorothy!" she said. "Wake up, you wretched child!" And shook her again.

Mrs. Dicky groaned and yawned, and opened her eyes one at a time. But when she saw it was Miss Patty she sat up at once, looking dazed and frightened.

"You needn't pinch me, Pat!" she said, and at that Mr. Dick awakened and jumped up, with the carriage robe still around him. "For heaven's sake, Pat, don't cry. I'm not dead. Dick, this is my sister, Patricia."

Miss Pat looked at him, but she didn't bow. She gave him one look, from his head to his heels.

"Dolly, how could you!" she said, and got up.

It wasn't comfortable for Mr. Dick, but he took it much better than I expected. He went over and gave his wife a hand to help her up, and still holding her, he turned to Miss Patty. "You are perfectly right," he said.

"I don't see how she could myself. The more you know of me the more you'll wonder. But she did; we're up against that."

He grinned at Miss Patty, and after a minute Miss Patty smiled back. But it wasn't much of a smile. Suddenly Mrs. Dick made a dive for Miss Patty and threw her arms around her.

"You darling!" she cried. "You're so glad to see you again—Pat, you'll tell father, won't you? He'll take it from you. If I tell him he'll have apoplexy or something."

But Miss Patty set her pretty mouth—both those girls have their father's mouth—and held her sister out at arm's length and looked at her.

"Listen," she said. "Do you know what you have done to me? Do you know that when father knows this he's going to annul the marriage or have Mr. Carter arrested for kidnapping or abduction?—whatever it is." Mrs. Dick puckered her face to cry, and Mr. Dick took a step forward, but Miss Patty waved him off. "You know what he is, and lately he's been awful."

"He can't annul it," said Mr. Dick angrily. "I'm of age, and I can support my wife, too, or will be able—soon."

"Dolly's not of age," said Miss Patty wearily. "I've sat up all night figuring it out. He's going to annul the marriage, or he'll make a scandal anyhow, and that's just as bad. Dolly!" she turned to her sister imploringly.

"Dolly, I can't have a scandal now. You know how Oskar's people have taken this, anyhow; they've given in because he insisted, but they don't want me, and if there's a lot of notoriety now the emperor will send him to Africa or some place, and—"

"If you really want me to be happy," Miss Patty finished, going over to her, "you'll go back to school until the wedding is over."

"I won't leave Dicky," she swung around and gave Mr. Dick an adoring glance, and Miss Patty looked discouraged.

"Take him with you," she said. "Isn't there some place near where he could stay, and telephone you now and then?"

"Telephone!" said Mrs. Dick scornfully. "Can't leave," Mr. Dick objected. "Got to be on the property. Look here, Miss—Miss Patricia, why can't we stay here, where we are? It's very comfortable—that is, it's comfortable—there's somebody to take my place in the house."

"And father needn't know a thing—you can fix that," broke in Mrs. Dick. "After your wedding he will be in a better humor; he'll know it's over and not up to him any more."

Miss Patty sat down on the soap box.

"We might carry it off," she said. "If I could only go back to town! But father is in one of his tantrums, and he won't go, or let me go. The idea!—with Aunt Honoria on the long-distance wire every day, having hysterics, and my clothes waiting to be tried on and everything. I'm desperate."

I put the eggs on a platter and poured the coffee, and we all sat around the soap box and ate.

Everybody felt better for the meal, and we were sitting there laughing and talking and very cheerful when Mr. Van Alstyne opened the door and looked in. His face was stern, but when he saw us, with Miss Patty on her knees toasting a piece of bread and Mr. Dicky passing the tin basin as a finger-bowl, he stopped scowling and looked amused.

"They're here, Gailie," he called to his wife, and they both came in, covered with snow, and we had coffee and eggs all over again.

Well, they stayed for an hour, and Mr. Sam talked himself black in the face and couldn't get anywhere. So finally he gave up and said he washed his hands of the whole affair, and that he was going to make another start on his wedding journey, and if they wanted to be a pair of fools it wasn't up to him—only for heaven's sake not to cry about it.

And when the Dicks found they were not going to be separated we had more coffee all around and everybody grew more cheerful.

Oh, we were very cheerful! I look back now and think how cheerful we were, and I shudder. We sat around the fire and ate and laughed, and Mr. Dick arranged that Mr. Pierce should come out to him every evening for orders about the place—if he accepted, and everybody felt he would—and I was to come at the same time and bring a basket of provisions for the next day. Of course, the instant Mr. Jennings left the young couple could go into the sanatorium as guests under another name and be comfortable. And as soon as the time limit was up and the place was still running smoothly, they could declare the truth, claim the sanatorium, having fulfilled the conditions of the will, and confess to Mr. Jennings—over the long-distance wire.

Well, it promised well, I must say. Mr. Stitt left on the ten train that morning, looking lemon-colored and mottled. He insisted that he wasn't able to go, but Mr. Sam gave him a headache powder and put him on the train, anyhow.

Yes, as I say, it promised well. But we made two mistakes; we didn't count on Mr. Thornburn, and we didn't know Mr. Pierce. And who could have imagined that Mike the bath man would do as he did?

After luncheon, when everybody at Hope Springs takes a nap, we had another meeting at the shelter-house, this time with Mr. Pierce. He looked dazed when I took him to the shelter-house and he saw Mr. Dick and Mrs. Dick and the Mr. Sams and Miss Patty. They gave him a lawn-mower to sit on, and Mr. Sam explained the situation.

"I know it's asking a good bit, Mr. Pierce," he said, "and personally I can see only one way out of all this. Carter ought to go in and take charge, and his—er—wife ought to go back to school. But they won't have it, and—"

Mr. Van Alstyne opened the door.

er—there are other reasons." He glanced at Miss Patty.

Mr. Pierce also glanced at Miss Patty. He'd been glancing at her at intervals of two seconds ever since she came in, and being a woman and having a point to gain, Miss Patty seemed to have forgotten the night before, and was very nice to him. After everything had been explained, including Mr. Jennings' liver and disposition, she turned to him and said:

"We are in your hands, you see, Mr. Pierce. Are you going to help us?" And when she asked him that, it was plain to me that he was only sorry he couldn't die helping.

"If everybody agrees to it," he said, looking at her, "and you all think it's feasible and I can carry it off, I'm perfectly willing to try."

"Of course," said Mr. Dick. "I expect to retain control, you understand that, I suppose, Pierce? You can come out every day for instructions. I dare say sanatoriums are hardly in your line."

"Eh—oh, well no, hardly," he said; "I've tried everything else, I believe. It can't be worse than carrying a bunch of sweet peas from garden to garden."

Mr. Dick stopped walking and turned suddenly to stare at Mr. Pierce. "Sweet—what?" he said.

Everybody else was talking, and I was the only one who saw him change color.

"Sweet peas," said Mr. Pierce. "And that reminds me—I'd like to make one condition, Mr. Carter. I feel in a measure responsible for the company; most of them have gone back to New York, but the leading woman, Miss Summers, is sick at the hotel in Finleyville. I'd like to bring her here for two weeks to recuperate. I assure you, I have no interest in her, but I'm sorry for her; she's had the mumps."

"Why, you've just had them, too, Dicky," said his wife. They all turned to look at him, and I must say his expression was curious. Luckily, I had the wit to knock over the breakfast basket, which was still there, and when we'd gathered up the broken china, Mr. Dick had got himself in hand.

"I'm sorry, old man," he said to Mr. Pierce, "but I'm not in favor of bringing Miss—the person you speak of—up to the sanatorium just now. Mumps, you know—very contagious, and all that."

"She's over that part," Mr. Pierce said; "she only needs to rest."

"Certainly, if she isn't well, bring her up," said Miss Patty. "Only—won't she know your name is not Carter?"

"She's discretion itself," Mr. Pierce said. "Her salary hasn't been paid

for a month, and as I'm responsible, I'd be glad to see her looked after."

"I don't want her here. I'll—I'll pay her board at the hotel," Mr. Dick began, "only for heaven's sake, don't—"

He stopped, for every one was staring.

"Why in the world would you do that?" Miss Patty asked. "Don't be ridiculous. That's the only condition Mr. Pierce has made."

Mr. Dick stalked to the window and looked out, his hands in his pockets. "Oh, bring her up! Bring her up!" he said without looking around. "If Pierce won't stay unless he can play the friend in need, all right."

That was Wednesday. In the afternoon Miss Julia Summers came with three lap robes, a white lace veil and a French poodle in a sleigh and went to bed in one of the best rooms, and that night we started to move out furniture to the shelter-house. Toward daylight Mr. Sam dropped a wash-bowl on my toe and I went to bed with an arnica compress.

I limped out in time to be on hand before Miss Cobb got there, but what with a chilblain on my heel and hardly any sleep for two nights—not to mention my toe—I wasn't any too pleasant.

She told me about Miss Summers being still shut in her room, and how she'd offered Mike an extra dollar to give the white poodle a Turkish bath—it being under the weather as to health—and how Mike had soaked the little beast for an hour in a tub of water, forgetting the sulphur, and it had come out a sort of mustard color, and how Miss Summers had had hysterics when she saw it.

"Mike dipped him in bluing to bleach him again, or rather her"—it's name is Arabella—Miss Cobb said, "but all it did was to make it mottled like an Easter egg. Everybody is charmed. There were no dogs allowed while the old doctor lived. Things were different."

"Yes, things were different," I assented. "How—how does Mr. Carter get along?"

Miss Cobb sniffed.

"Well," she said, "goodness knows I'm no trouble maker, but somebody ought to tell that young man a few things. He's forever looking at the thermometer and opening windows. I declare, if I hadn't brought my woolen tights along I'd have frozen to death at breakfast. Everybody's complaining."

I put that away in my mind to speak about. It was only by nailing the windows shut and putting strips of cotton batting around the cracks that we'd ever been able to keep people there in winter. I had my first misgiving then. Heaven knows I didn't realize what it was going to be.

There was something on Mr. Dick's mind. I hadn't known him for fourteen years for nothing. And the night Mr. Sam and I went out the canned salmon and corn and tomatoes he walked back with me to the edge of the deer park, Mr. Sam having gone ahead.

"Now," I said, when we were out of ear-shot, "spit it out. I've been expecting it."

"Listen, Minnie," he answered. "Something's got to be done, and done soon. If you want the plain truth, Miss—er—Summers and I used to be friends—and well, she's suing me for breach of promise. Now for heaven's sake, Minnie, don't make a fuss—"

But my knees wouldn't hold me. I dropped down in a snow-drift and covered my face.

## CHAPTER VI.

I dragged myself back to the spring-house and dropped in front of the fire. What with worry and no sleep and now this new complication I was dead as yesterday's newspaper. I sat there on the floor with my hands around my knees, thinking what to do next.

When I opened my eyes Mr. Pierce



was sitting on the other side of the chimney and staring at the fire. He had a pipe between his teeth, but he wasn't smoking, and he had something of the same look about his mouth he'd had the first day I saw him.

"Well!" he said, when he saw I was awake.

That minute I made up my mind not to tell him all the facts. He might think the situation was too much for him and leave, or he might decide he ought to tell Miss Summers where Dick was. There was no love lost between him and Mr. Carter.

"I'm just tired and cranky," I said, "so—Miss Summers settled yet?"

He nodded, as if he wasn't thinking of Miss Summers.

"What did you tell her?"

"Haven't seen her," he said. "Sent her a note that I was understanding a man named Carter and to mind to pick up her cues."

"It's a common enough name," I said, but he had lighted his pipe again and had dropped forward, one elbow on his knee, his hand holding the bowl of his pipe, and staring into the fire. He looked up when I closed and looked the pantry door.

"I've just been thinking," he remarked, "here we are—a group of people—all struggling like mad for one thing, but with different motives. Mine are plain enough and mercenary enough, although a certain red-haired girl with a fine loyalty to an old doctor and a sanatorium is carrying me along with her enthusiasm. And Van Alstyne's motives are clear enough—and selfish. Carter is merely trying to save his own skin—but a girl like Miss Pat—Miss Jennings."

"There's nothing uncertain about what she wants, or wrong either," I retorted. "She's right enough. The family can't stand a scandal just now with her wedding so close."

He smiled and got up, emptying his pipe.

"Nevertheless, oh, Minnie of the glowing hair and heart," he said, "Miss Jennings has disappointed me. You see, I believe in marrying for love."

"Love!" I was disgusted. "Don't talk to me about love! Love is the sort of thing that makes two silly idiots run away and get married and live in a shelter-house, upsetting everybody's plans, while their betters have to worry themselves sick and carry them victuals."

He got up and began to walk up and down the spring-house, scowling at the floor.

Then picking up his old cap he opened the door. Miss Patty herself was coming up the path.

She was flushed from the cold air and from hurrying, and I don't know that I ever saw her look prettier. When she came into the light we could both see that she was dressed for dinner. Her fur coat was open at the neck, and she had only a lace scarf over her head.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



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